

WePress Annual Report, 2019

Acknowledgement

WePress acknowledges that its space is and activities take place on the unceded and occupied territories of the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), and səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

The mission of WePress is to advance education by providing workshops on historic and contemporary methods of print- and art- making for the public, with a particular focus on individuals from marginalized communities in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES).

WePress offers historic and contemporary methods of print- and art-making in a safe and welcoming space, particularly to those marginalized by systems of class, sexuality, gender, race, culture, disability, mental health, addictions, and colonization. We seek to support them to voice their stories, lived experience, and dreams, and to build community capacity and resilience through art-making.

Highlights of 2019

- held 40 free weekly Open Studio drop-in art-making sessions at which about 10 people on average attend, many of whom are regulars (400+ individual visits). Provided art-making supplies, support by facilitators, and snacks and drinks at every session;
- held 33 workshops that provided 87 hours of instruction for 236+ participants;
- Hosted or participated in 7 free events that were attended by 370+ people, including our free public book pre-launch for *The Art & Stories of Chinese Seniors in Vancouver's Chinatown* project which will share the stories of over 65 Chinese Seniors;
- covered a variety of workshop topics including crazy quilting, letterpress (including one workshop with ASL Interpretation for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities), banner painting, how to create fantasy creatures, cold process soap making, coptic binding, block printmaking, stop motion animation, and note-book making;
- 42 artists were paid \$15,000+ in fees and salaries to lead workshops and run arts programming;
- \$10,000+ was paid in interpreter and documentation contact fees;
- support from 20 new and regular volunteers

Activities and Major Projects

Open Studio

- Modelled after our previous project, the *Neighbourhood Sketchbook Project*, Open Studios offer a regular time and space for anyone to drop by, connect with others, and make art with the help of facilitators.

- Earlier this year, Heidi Nagtegaal and Haisla Collins became designated Open Studio lead facilitators, with assistant facilitators, Jane Shi, Tracy Moromisato, Shirley Lum, Linda Uyehara Hoffman, and Hollis Nelson.
- Open Studios are currently on hold due to the pandemic.
- Plans to distribute free art kits with meals and other supplies through collaborations with other DTES organizations are in the works and we have applied for additional funding to support this as a way to provide art-making in the neighbourhood until we can gather in our space again.

The Art & Stories of Chinese Seniors in Vancouver's Chinatown Program

- This started in 2018 as a project which consisted of 10 art-making workshops, and culminated in 2019 with a free, public book pre-launch at Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden on January 27th at which over 110 attendees listened to Chinese Seniors tell their stories in Cantonese and Mandarin with English and ASL interpretation provided. Food and beverages were served.
- This project became a regular program of WePress that is led by young Chinese Canadians who continued to meet regularly after the event to transcribe the stories of the Chinese Seniors from the project into traditional and simplified Chinese, and translate them into English. They have developed a unique collaborative approach to translation and document sharing, are working on the book structure and will be preparing the artwork and stories for publication. They have continued to meet virtually during the pandemic, which will continue throughout 2020.
- The group will also continue discussing how they can support Chinese Seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Indigenous Languages & Art-Making Community Engagement Project

- Building on our previous work with members of the DTES urban Indigenous communities, the Indigenous Languages Project is to be steered by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers and artists (paid CARFAC fees) to develop, design, and direct community art-making workshops and interviews with participants about how they access Indigenous languages, arts, and culture. Our plan was to build relationships slowly, carefully, and respectfully, including hiring trauma peer support workers.
- Earlier this year, we connected with Indigenous artists Larissa Healey (Anishinabek) and Haisla Collins (Tsimshian, Nisga'a Gitsan) to help us with the project.
- The project is currently on hold due to the pandemic.

Ensoku (field trip): a young-ish Japanese Canadian gathering

- worked with young Japanese Canadians to host a stop motion workshop led by Cindy Mochizuki on May 19th as part of *Ensoku*.

Organizational and Financial Sustainability and Development

- Establishing administrative systems;
- Building our database;

- Developing a 'wiki' site which will be a portal for sharing our processes and how to do things step-by-step (such as run a block printmaking workshop) that we will share with other downtown eastside organizations and the public-at-large;
- Professional development workshops, including Queer Competency and Facilitation workshops for Collective members and artist facilitators;
- Acquired charitable status; and
- Secured additional sources of funding, including City of Vancouver Cultural Services Annual Assistance, BC Arts Council Annual Operating Funds, and BC Community Gaming funding.

In 2020

Community Response to the Pandemic

- With the current pandemic, we have made the decision to close the WePress space until further notice.
- In an effort to continue to support DTES communities, we have applied for and received a \$50,000 Community Response Fund grant to purchase 5 days of 1200 ready-made meals per day from Potluck Catering and its team which are then distributed to those unhoused and precariously housed by peers from our DTES partner organizations. We are also working to support the re-establishment of the DTES Community Kitchens program.
- We have also offered some financial assistance to our artists, facilitators, and translators whose income from WePress has been suspended due to our closure.
- WePress volunteers have prepped over 450 cell phones (pairing cell phone donated by SPARC BC with plans donated by Telus, charging and setting up the phones, disinfecting the phones with the cell # clearly indicated, storing in ziplocs) so that they are ready for distribution by over 35 DTES organizations.

Looking Ahead

We are exploring ways to continue to deliver arts programming and support DTES communities and our artists in ways that respond to the current crisis while maintaining our mandate. This includes:

- distributing free art supply kits in the neighbourhood;
- hiring artists to create zines on art-making techniques (and other content) to be included in art kits;
- offering virtual art-making workshops led by artist facilitators.

Many Thanks to Everyone Who Supported Us

Special Thanks to: Everyone at Gallery Gachet, Emiko Morita and everyone at the Powell Street Festival Society (PSFS), Cecily Nicholson, Anthony Meza-Wilson; Brian McBay and 221A, Heather Pelles, and Marlene Yuen.

Thank you to our outgoing Board Members Michael Clague and Diane Kadota. Special shout out to Michael who has been with WePress since it began as the Ho Sun Hing Project and has been a key part of the Collective and one of its most dedicated supporters.

Thank you to our funders and sponsors Vancouver Foundation, the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors Program, City of Vancouver through Cultural Services, BC Arts Council, Province of British Columbia, Community Impact Real Estate Society, and Opus Art Supplies.

Thanks to everyone we worked with this year Aboriginal Front Door, Carnegie Community Centre & Oppenheimer Park, Community Arts Council of Vancouver, Culture Saves Lives, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, DTES Small Arts Grants, EMBERS Eastside Works, *Ensoku* team, Gallery 221A, Gallery Gachet, Makers & Artists United, Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, Powell Street Festival Society, Street Vendors Collective, Vancouver Moving Theatre and DTES Heart of the City Festival, Yarrow Intergenerational Society for Justice, and many others.

Thanks to all our volunteers and supporters – Too many to name!



WePress Community Arts Space Society 2019



On January 27, 2019, we held our public event, *We Are All Artists*, at the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden. Linda, a WePress Collective member of Japanese ancestry, describes our project. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



aly, a WePress Collective member of mixed chinese and filipinx ancestry, shares their perspective with a crowd of over 110 people. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Simultaneous Translation Equipment allowed the speakers at our public event to present their information and share stories in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Wilson speaks Cantonese, Mandarin, and English very well and knows many of the Chinese Seniors personally so was the perfect MC to introduce the seniors who spoke. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Ms. Li shared her story in Mandarin and has been a key member of the Organizing Committee and a loyal fan of WePress. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Ms. Li read and showed the poem she had written about the rights of Indigenous people and the respect that should be given to them and their lands. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Young Chinese Canadians came to hear the stories of their Elders. *We Are All Artists* was truly an intergenerational, intercultural event. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Mary shared the story of her father who was forced to pay the Head Tax in order to enter Canada, showing the audience her personal historic photographs and documents. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



We Are All Artists put the stories of Chinese Seniors at the center of this public event. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



WePress Board members supported this project on many levels – from volunteering for the Organizing Committee to helping out at workshops and events. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Photos taken by Lenée Son, Kayla Isomura, Tracy Moromisato, Minshu Mo, and Annette Cheung at the ten workshops were shared with the public at our event. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



People signed up to pre-order the book that WePress plans to publish featuring this project and the stories of Chinese Seniors. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



Our project has helped create a special bond between young people and seniors who feel connected to each other and to WePress. Photo by Kayla Isomura.



WePress ran its first letterpress workshop with ASL Interpretation in order to prioritize the participation of members of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities. It was facilitated by Kay Slater, a member of the Hard of Hearing community. Photo by Tracy Moromisato.



Artwork created by regular attendees of Open Studio drop-in art-making sessions that were held every Monday from 2 to 4 pm. Photos by Heidi Nagtegaal.



In this pilot project, WePress, Gallery Gachet, and *The Capilano Review* hosted a block printmaking workshop at EMBERS Eastside Works to help SRO tenants and members of Street Vendors Collective.



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WePress and Gallery Gachet hosted a block printmaking workshop at our shared space as part of the 16th Annual Downtown Eastside Heart of the City Festival. Photo by Kathy Shimizu.



Derek Armstrong leads a monthly workshop entitled *Igniting Creativity: Mythological Creatures* where he shares his portfolio and the techniques he uses to create everything from centaurs to dragons.